

New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1948

Volume IX, Number 4

Rachel W. Coffin, Editor

Week of February 16, 1948

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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS	NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK MIRROR	NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK SUN	NEW YORK POST
	NEW YORK TIMES

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"Doctor Social"

Journal of the American

FEBRUARY 12, 1948

Cupid and Cancer Don't Go Together

By ROBERT GARLAND

At the Booth, all "Dr. Social" can be divided into three parts. Two have to do with plastic surgery and cancer research. About these I wouldn't know! But the surgeon who sometimes goes to the theatre with me reports that the theory they advance is not too implausible, that the details of their advancement are not too inaccurate.

As for the remaining part of Joseph Estrzy's play, that's within my knowledge. For it has to do with the customary rising young physician who is torn between his Hippocratic oath and his natural desire to make a little money. And he performs the customary operation on the customary girlfriend using her as the customary human guinea pig.

In programs at the Booth, the love-story of Norman Farrar, the

"Dr. Social" of the title, and Lee Manning, his charming but cancerous girl-friend, is prefaced by a reference to Science Magazine, a reprint from Newsweek and a technical okay by the American Cancer Society. These make interesting, even alarming, reading...

What follows is like entertainment in an operating room.

A Grand MD

All right, then! This Norman Farrar pretends to be a doctorial dastard, a plastic surgeon who'd charge his own mother a couple of grand for a prettier proboscis.

In a modernistic office designed by Stewart Chaney, he relieves a poor working girl of her last three hundred bucks for a nasal bob any true Hippocratic would do for nothing.

But his heart's of gold. Egged on by a dear old doctor who looks like Al Shean, he refuses to sell his anti-cancer serum to a medical manufacturing concern.

Instead, he presents it to the American Cancer Society and the medical manufacturing concern will manufacture it in the long run, anyway. As a layman, I don't see the difference.

However, I'm sure its good and noble. As for Lee Manning, Dr. Farrar's charming but cancerous girl-friend, she emerges from her becoming bandages looking better than she ever did, while Dr. Morrisey, the remaining member of the eternal triangle, goes out into Park ave. to open up an office of his own...

So ends the entertainment in the operating room.

Acting's Worthy

More frequently than not, the acting's worthy of the play, the play which is only a third of Joseph Estrzy's "Dr. Social."

Dean Jagger, returning to Broadway after a sojourn in the Hollywoods, plays the plastic surgeon-into-messianic - medico with a straight face and a disturbing reminder of the late Glen Hunter.

Halla Stoddard, the reliable taker-over, has taken over for Virginia Gilmore as Lee Man-

'DOCTOR SOCIAL'

Play by Joseph L. Estrzy; staged by Don Appell; setting and lighting by Stewart Chaney; presented by Harold Barnard at the Booth Theater Wednesday evening, February 11, 1948. The cast:

Ann Harris.....Eda Heinemann
Dr. Tom Morrisey.....Ronald Alexander
Mrs. Hamilton.....Nelly Malcolm
Dr. Norman Farrar.....Dean Jagger
Yvonne Tompkins.....Mae Quastel
Dr. Isaac Gordon.....Al Shean
Dr. Fleming.....Donald Foster
Lee Manning.....Halla Stoddard
Paul Harris.....Drake Thornton

Synopsis: The entire action of the play takes place in Dr. Farrar's office, laboratory and treatment room. Act. I.—The present. Act. II, Scene 1.—Fire weeks later. Scene 2.—One week later. Act. III, Scene 1.—A few days later. Scene 2.—Fifteen minutes later.

ning, the doctor's guinea pig in clothes by Cell Chapman.

She's easy on ear and eye, before and after her fictitious operation. As Isaac Gordon, an idealistic old physician, Al Shean is still performing Father Malsch's footlighting miracle.

Edna Heinemann acts up as secretary to "Dr. Social." Drake Thornton mugs in the school of Madame Ouspenskaya as her uncomfortably collegiate offspring.

Mae Quastel continues her Betty-Bopping as a lady in search of a new elefactory organ. And so it goes, with the direction of Don Appell, of no great help to the operating room or its intramural entertainment...

Cupid and cancer just don't belong on-stage together!

The New York Times

FEBRUARY 10, 1948

Tribute Paid to Late Burns Mantle, Dean Of Drama Critics, by The Times' Critic

By BROOKS ATKINSON

After an illness of six weeks Burns Mantle, drama critic emeritus of The Daily News, died yesterday at his home in Forest Hills. It might almost be accurate to say that he withdrew. For he had been failing steadily ever since Christmas Day and no longer had much enthusiasm for living. Starting at the crucifix on the the wall of the hospital where he spent January in bed, he genially remarked: "I suppose they put that up there to remind me how much better off I am."

The cheerfulness that was constantly welling up out of his inner nature continued to overflow a little, for it would be unlike him to visit his private suffering on his friends. "If I had a good rewrite man I could do a good Sunday feature on this affair," he humorously declared.

In memory of a colleague it would be appropriate to dwell on

his eminent career and his services to the theatre. He had been a drama critic for a half century in Denver, Chicago and New York; and his series of the "Best Plays of the Year," begun in 1920, became the theatre's sourcebook for students and theatregoers throughout America. But a man's work is only a reflection of his character. There was a kind of radiance about Burns, centered in his home and exactly reflected in his patient, appreciative writings in The Daily News and his books.

As a matter of principle, he believed that a critic should not associate with people working in the theatre. But his innate friendliness was constantly betraying him. Wherever there was a good cause in the theatre he was in the midst of it. Since he loved the theatre, he could not withhold himself from the people who make it. Before his retirement five

years ago, most people would have thought that he had a crushing schedule of work. In addition to his work on The Daily News he wrote a weekly syndicate letter and pegged away steadily on his yearly book of best plays. But he never pleaded overwork when he was asked to address a group, join a committee for good works or attend a function for the good of the theatre. Burns never was found wanting when he was needed.

He was modest to a fault. That was why he repeatedly referred to himself in the third person: "Well, Mantle is going to give the matter his usual consideration," he would say piously. Gentle and kindly by nature, he resented savage criticism or critical irresponsibility.

Some inner strength of character carried him serenely through the years. Although he was sparingly scornful of anything, he had contempt for people without faith. "They don't dare believe in anything," he said during a quiet moment in his illness three weeks ago. What he was as a critic extended logically down through his whole life, which was full of love and good will. Eminent as his journalistic career was, his great triumph was the cheerfulness and happiness of his private life in Forest Hills. Everything else stemmed from there.

"Doctor Social"—continued

The New York Times

FEBRUARY 12, 1948

Doctor's Dilemma

By BROOKS ATKINSON

By putting together some medical facts and some old customs and habits of the theatre, Joseph L. Estrzy has come up with a play about cancer, "Doctor Social," acted at the Booth last evening.

Although the basic medical fact is printed in the program, your theatre correspondent is not qualified to express an opinion about it. But constant experience in play-going suggests that the theatre aspects of the drama are hokum.

In the first act Dr. Farrar is a hard-headed plastic surgeon, keen on the dollar. He does not believe in giving anything to science without receiving a fortune in return. But in the course of developing a serum for the market he performs an operation on a beautiful girl. After she falls in love with him

and he with her, he discovers that she has cancer. He saves her life in time for the third act curtain. Shaken by this experience, he abandons his rich social practice and takes a job at \$150 a week in a cancer foundation.

In a foul, materialistic age like ours, Dr. Farrar's spiritual reformation is noble. And the producers of "Doctor Social" are at least generous. They have paid Stewart Chaney to design an expensive, semi-convertible setting that pictures the sanitary elegance of the medical profession. No pikers in the casting office, they have en-

gaged an attractive troupe of trained actors—Dean Jagger, Haila Stoddard, Al Shean, Eda Heine-mann, Ronald Alexander and Donald Foster, to cite the most professional.

They wear white coats, murder guinea pigs, squirt into microscopes and release jets of compressed air in the laboratory. Dr. Jagger performs some miraculous operations. And medicine is an uplifting profession, though still a little unsteady with the common cold. But "Dr. Social" joins the mumbo-jumbo of science to the fiddle-faddle of the theatre, which results in a compounded asporific.

Herald Tribune

FEBRUARY 12, 1948

By HOWARD BARNES

Noble Intentions

CANCER is the theme of "Doctor Social"—an outspoken and sometimes dramatic commentary on a dread disease. There can be no question that someone involved in the new offering at the Booth is concerned in a crusade of enlightenment and hope. Like "Yellow Jack," this theatrical projection of medical research has a savage fascination, merely because

of its subject matter. In addition, the Joseph L. Estrzy play is ably served by the performances of Dean Jagger, Haila Stoddard and Al Shean in the leading roles. If it misses its mark, it is because the stage consistently refuses to be a podium and the piece itself is feeble.

Estrzy has celebrated current experiments in spleen extract for cancer, using a couple of guinea pigs and a lovely lady for his theatrical blueprint. There are interludes of arresting action, as a plastic surgeon with a lucrative practice gives up the changing of noses and scars to become a modern day Pasteur. While it is lush with dramatic clichés, "Doctor

Social" is very much in earnest. It is never asporific. As a show, it is questionable entertainment. The work might better have originated on the screen.

The plot follows old grooves with an aggravating insistence. Dr. Farrar is a society medico with a steady hand for changing ugly ducklings into swans. When he meets a comely patient whose facial disfigurements have led to malignant growth, he falls in love with her and dedicates himself to poorly paid research. That is all there is to it. That "Doctor Social" packs several dramatic punches in its three acts is surprising.

Jagger does a yeoman job in

the part of the skin-graftor who feels certain that he has stumbled on a cure to a terrible scourge. Miss Stoddard is properly intense and scared as the girl who faces the realization that she may have cancer and Shean contributes a quiet and forceful portrayal as an elder doctor who counsels the plastic surgeon. Mae Questel has a comic bit as a frowsy matron who thinks that a straight nose will make her the belle of the ball and Drake Thornton adds some telling counterpoint as the son of the doctor's nurse. Don Appell has staged the work tightly and Stewart Chaney has dressed it correctly. "Doctor Social" is a drama of noble intentions, but far too little theatrical satisfaction.

New York Post

FEBRUARY 12, 1948

An Unhappy Evening With 'Doctor Social'

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

It is an ungracious business, this throttling of inept little plays filled with the most amiable of intentions, but there is no getting around the dismal fact that "Doctor Social," which opened at the Booth last night, is one of the mishaps of the season. There is nothing much wrong with it, save that it is completely lacking in

everything except those good intentions. And you know how little they mean in the ruthless theatre.

What the author, one Joseph L. Estrzy, is trying to do is dramatize the career of a brilliant young doctor who is so disillusioned by the post-war world that he decides to be a rich plastic surgeon rather than devote himself to idealistic scientific research. Although he discovers a serum valuable in fighting cancer, he has grown selfish enough to sell it to a drug company instead of giving it to mankind.

I can hardly expect to bowl you over with the news that at this point love comes into his life. A beautiful girl enters. She

has cancer. To be brief about it, he cures her, has a soul struggle with himself and, in the end, decides to pass up the drug company and carry on in the interest of humanity. I must admit that Mr. Estrzy doesn't go in for any sensationalism in his story-telling. He is merely earnest and dull.

Moral Fervor

No one can say that I don't treasure moral fervor in the theatre. And the moral fervor of "Doctor Social" is unquestionable. Its author is commendably in earnest about all sorts of good medical causes, tossing in a friendly word for socialized medicine. He also hates cancer. But it takes some knowledge of

drama and writing to make a good play, and "Doctor Social" shows no signs of understanding either. That goes for the clumsy serious scenes and the painful comic ones.

As usual, some good actors are unhappily involved in the proceedings. Dean Jagger, whom I still remember with pleasure as Jesse James in a neglected play called "Missouri Legend," can achieve little with the title role, and Al Shean, who was so delightful in "Father Malachy's Miracle," has nothing to do as an idealistic medical veteran. Only Haila Stoddard, as the girl, is able to get any emotional effectiveness into her work. As a juvenile, Drake Thornton is ex-cruciatingly boyish.

DAILY NEWS

FEBRUARY 12, 1948

'Dr. Social' a Flim-Flammy Play About Love and Cancer Studies

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"Doctor Social," a play by Joseph L. Estrzy which found itself in the Booth Theatre last evening—perhaps to its own surprise—is a non-musical "Allegro" about a fancypants plastic surgeon who sees the folly of his ways and plunges into cancer research.

The duty of a medico toward his

high calling has been the theme of many fine dramas, but Mr. Estrzy is not one of them. Its plot is un-

imaginative and its clinical details seem spurious, even though a note in the program says "The medical research in this play stems in part from authentic scientific work reported in Science Magazine."

"Dr. Social" is a fashionable and money-crazy remodeler of beaks and bosoms who hits upon a serum

which seems to control the growth of scar tissue—a handy injection for any type of operation which may be of inestimable value in the control of cancer tissue. He wants to sell it to a big drug outfit and make a fortune, but in the end his love for a girl leads him to renounce commercialism and dedicate himself to research.

I wish that a happier report than this could welcome back from Hollywood an old friend, Dean Jagger, who has the title role. But the presence of such good players as Jagger, Haila Stoddard and Al Shean is not enough to make Mr. Estrzy's play any better than it was when it was written—and it wasn't written well enough. It lacks conviction and excitement, and I regret to opine, so do the actors.

"Doctor Social"—continued

Daily Mirror

FEBRUARY 12, 1948

Doctor Social Opens At Booth Theatre

By ROBERT COLEMAN

The moral of "Doctor Social," which Harold Bernard brought to the Booth Theatre last evening, seems to be: The laborer is not worthy of his hire if he happens to be a doctor or a scientist. Doctors and scientists should be above wanting comfortable homes and security for their families. They should just be content to give their all for humanity.

Author Joseph L. Estrzy introduces us to Dr. Norman Farrar, a plastic surgeon, dubbed Dr. Social, because he charges high fees to beautify those with unlovely faces. In addition to eliminating wrinkles from cheeks and bumps from noses, Dr. Farrar also experiments with a serum that promises to promote rapid healing, discourage scar tissue

and even stop the growth of cancerous cells.

Dr. Farrar's old teacher, Dr. Isaac Gordon, is shocked to learn that he plans to license the formula for the serum to a chemical firm. Dr. Gordon wants him to donate it to a cancer foundation without compensation, even though Dr. Farrar's nurse is the widow of a scientist who gave

his patents to foundation and left his family in poverty.

Dr. Farrar, to prove the efficacy of his product, operates upon a young woman disfigured by an explosion in the chemical firm's laboratory, injecting her with the magic serum, of course. And, as you've suspected, the hardboiled fellow falls in love with his patient. Prodded on by the girl, Dr. Gordon and his assistant, Dr. Farrar, turns down royalties on his serum and gives it to a foundation, for which he also goes to work for \$150 per week as a researcher.

There have been a number of plays in recent seasons urging doctors to give up their lucrative practices the better to help humanity. But the authors who penned these stage tracts failed to practice what they preached. They failed to sign over their royalties to humanity. They failed to offer their incomes to establish funds for the families of wretchedly paid scientists killed fighting such lethal enemies of mankind as tick and undulant fevers.

Author Estrzy, however, believes in the philosophy set forth in "Dr. Social." He, according to those who should know, has assigned his royalties from the play to cancer research. We respect him for his honesty of purpose and action, even as we regret having to report that the drama is not likely to enrich the worthy project.

"Doctor Social" is a short, talky, unconvincing script about a muddled genius. Perhaps the cynical, brilliant Dr. Farrar did succumb almost immediately to the charms of his pretty patient. Perhaps he did change his social viewpoint almost overnight. But Estrzy hasn't been able to make us believe it.

Producer Barnard has given the play the benefits of a handsome setting by Stewart Chaney, the earnest direction of Don Appell and a capable cast, including Dean Jagger, Haila Stoddard, Al Shean, Donald Foster, Ronald Alexander, Eda Heine-mann, Mae Questel and Drake Thornton. They are not enough.

The Sun

FEBRUARY 12, 1948

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Vital Subject, No Play.

"Doctor Social," presented last evening at the Booth, is an extraordinarily empty and tedious play on a vital subject, cancer research. It's the work of Joseph L. Estrzy, a dramatist entirely new to the files of this department, and it is brought into town by Harold Barnard.



Some very amateurish playwrighting comes into evidence during the three acts at the Booth. The characters are puppets, the love story is trite, the comedy is feeble, and it's all just a little more clinical than it is theatrical. "Doctor Social" is one of the drama year's most inept projects.

The principal character is one Dr. Norman Farrar, a plastic surgeon, who has a swarm of wealthy women patients willing to pay handsomely for nose and chin jobs, and he is getting rich fast. The cause of medicine doesn't matter. He has, however, developed or discovered a serum that brings about speedy healing of scar tissues, and along comes a lovely girl who was disfigured in a wartime accident.

Well, the doctor takes the case, makes her beautiful again, falls in love with her—and she with him—and there's the revelation that the serum may be of aid in cancer control. The play finishes with the doctor spurning a profitable alliance with a drug syndicate and deciding to devote his talents—and his serum—to research and humanity.

The performances are routine. Dean Jagger, an engaging player upon occasion—certainly upon the occasion of "Missouri Legend"—has scant success in making a

characterization of the doctor. Haila Stoddard has a nice moment or two as his pretty and courageous patient. Al Shean putters about as a wise and humane man of medicine and Eda Heinemann is professionally brisk as the office attendant.

Good settings seem somehow to go along with these forlorn little plays, and Stewart Chaney's fancy scenery is wasted at the Booth.

There should be a play, a fine play, in the subject of cancer research, but "Doctor Social" is nothing at all.



FEBRUARY 13, 1948

Kronenberger

A Creditable Message But Otherwise a Mess

The new play at the Booth is a play with a message, and a message we can all endorse. What it asks, in effect, is that brilliant doctors devote their lives, not to fashionable practices but to serious research; and that they give, not sell, their discoveries to the world.

But like so many plays with a message, *Dr. Social* is overwhelmingly better message than play. I'm afraid, in fact, that as a play it's just no good at all. Its plot is the tritest sort possible for illustrating its theme. Its people are the flattest sort possible for carrying out its plot. Except for a few bits of medical detail, it falls quite as much to be interesting as it does to ring true. And its more bantering moments and more decorative characters are an out-

and-out affliction.

The play tells of a brilliant plastic surgeon who is very much out for himself. He already has a fine fancy practice, and has now developed a vital serum which, instead of giving to the medical world, he plans to sell to a drug company. To make a long evening short, he falls in love with a patient, whom he not only cures of a skin disease but saves in the nick of time from cancer; and in gratitude that her life is spared, suddenly chucks everything for a career of impecunious research.

Dr. Social is easy enough to stage-design, and Stewart Chaney's office set looks handsomely up-to-date; but it is not very easy to act, and is not very skilfully acted. Haila Stoddard seems to me rather better as the girl than Dean Jagger as the doctor; but in both cases, it is far fairer to praise their efforts than linger over the results.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER





FEBRUARY 12, 1948

'Dr. Social' Requires A Shot in the Arm

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Last night's opening, "Doctor Social," is a play with a checkered past, including late cast changes and frantic rewrites. It is not likely to stay around long

enough to have a checkered future.

With all good intent, the piece investigates the manners and morals of some doctors engaged

by accident in seeking a cure for cancer. It is superficial and transparent. It is also artificially clinical in a way that is neither interesting nor rational.

The general atmosphere is that of a tossed-together movie, or a true confession.

A plastic surgeon has invented a serum which will stimulate the healing of cells. He used it with success on a girl who has been disfigured in an explosion at her work as a biochemist.

A Doctor in Love.

Coincidentally he falls in love with the girl, she develops signs of cancer, and he finds out that a concentrate of his serum will halt the growth of tissue and may cure cancer.

There is an adjacent subplot concerning the doctor's intention of selling his discovery to a phar-

maceutical firm. Naturally, the waning of the lady's affection leads him to give it to the world.

End Is Obvious.

All this is so obvious and so tritely told that the end is in plain sight shortly after the beginning.

Dean Jagger and Halia Stoddard play the leads quietly and with dignity. They are no more intense than the play is imaginative.

Al Shean has a few lines as an idealistic elder doctor and Eda Heinemann does as she is told as a nurse. Mae Questel gets a few laughs as a girl ambitious for a new nose and Ronald Alexander and Drake Thornton aim at characterizing two highly objectionable young men.

"John Bull's Other Island"

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

FEBRUARY 11, 1948

By HOWARD BARNES

Off to a Good Start

THE celebrated Dublin Gate Theater has launched its first New York engagement with an affectionate and engaging revival of "John Bull's Other Island." The Bernard Shaw play is the first in a festival of four Irish comedies at the Mansfield Theater. It is not one of the expatriate Irish author's best works, but the Dublin company makes much of its 1904 jibes at English and Irish temperament, electioneering, tithes and the Catholic Church. With Hilton Edwards (an Englishman), giving a wonderfully bombastic portrayal of John Bull, and Michael MacLiammoir aiding him at every turn as a renegade Irishman, the show has wit, style and complete authenticity.

Age has not improved this

Shavian conversation piece. A laggard first act defies all the efforts of the visiting players to make it dramatically effective. Fortunately, there is matter of consequence and high humor in the final stanzas. It is realized splendidly in the easy assurance of the acting, Edwards's nicely modulated staging and simple, honest settings. Shaw had great fun with his Englishman in Ireland, intent upon patronizing all classes, wooing a local heiress and finding it a good thing politically, and quite oblivious to the derision with which the inhabitants of Roscullen greeted him. His satirical ax was double-edged. The Irish come in for plenty of caustic comment in "John Bull's Other Island."

The episode of the pig, which Tom Broadbent stubbornly insists on delivering to old Matt Haffigan in his motor car, is hilarious. The musings of mad old Father Keegan on the progress of civilization, hell on earth and the methods of British business men still retain a fine theatrical flavor. The Shaw play may not show the Dublin Gate Theater at its best, but it

demonstrates that it is an immensely aware and resourceful stage group. For one who never saw the comedy performed, the current offering is a considerable delight. It drags at times; it is never properly resolved, but it builds constantly and it has more than a little dramatic color.

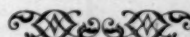
Edwards is an actor of remarkable authority as well as a canny director. His portrayal of Broadbent is right on the edge of burlesque, without ever relying on sheer caricature for its impact. If ever there was a typical Englishman of the first decade of the century, it is his characterization of the type. MacLiammoir's performance is muted in the current offering, but that is as it should be. Meriel Moore is excellent as the old maid of Roscullen, who has waited eighteen years for her Irish lover's return and accepts the Englishman in a fit of pique. The Father Keegan of Edward Golden is mystically appealing and Patrick Nolan adds some lusty touches to the piece as the village wog. Molly MacEwen's settings, mostly backdrops, are quite adequate.

'JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND'

JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND, a comedy by Bernard Shaw. Staged by Hilton Edwards; scenery designed and painted by Emily MacEwen; a Dublin Gate Theatre production as presented by Edward Aldrich and Richard Rivers in association with Brian Doberty. At the Mansfield Theatre.

Notes:	Norman Watts
Tom Broadbent	Hilton Edwards
The Haffigan	Raymond Jermol
LARRY Doyle	Michael MacLiammoir
Father Keegan	Edward Golden
Patry Farrell	Boy Irving
Meriel Moore	Meriel Moore
Corneilus Doyle	Benita Brunson
Father Dempsey	Bryan Herbert
Aunt Judy	Mae O'Mahony
Matthew Haffigan	Liam Gannon
Barney Doran	Patrick Nolan

SYNOPSIS: Act I, Scene 1—The home and office of Doyle & Broadbent, Civil Engineers, Great George's Street, Westminster, London. A Sunday evening, 1894. Scene 2—A hillside near Roscullen, Ireland. An evening some days later. Scene 3—The Round Tower near Roscullen. Later that evening. Act II, Scene 1—Parlour in Corneilus Doyle's house, Roscullen. After breakfast the next morning. Act III, Scene 1—Parlour in Corneilus Doyle's house. The same day. Scene 2—The Hillside. Later in the evening.



"John Bull's Other Island" is entertaining. It offers promise of better things to come at the Mansfield.

New York Post

FEBRUARY 11, 1948

Dublin Gate Presents Shaw on the Irish

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

The Dublin Gate Theatre, second only in fame to the illustrious Abbey as international torchbearer of the Irish drama, opened its local season at the Mansfield last night with a welcome pro-

duction of "John Bull's Other Island," the only play Bernard Shaw ever wrote about his own country. The ironic reflections of the greatest living Irishman on the misconceptions those embattled neighbors, the Irish and the English, have about themselves and each other may have resulted in one of his minor works, but there is so much characteristic wit, wisdom, insight and deep understanding in the comedy that, for all its waywardness, it is a provocative delight.

If ever a play called down "a plague of both your houses" it is

"John Bull's Other Island." With his unerring eye, Shaw saw through the pretensions, the illusions, the frailties and the dreams of both his native and his adopted lands, and he proceeded to strip them away with ruthlessness and candor. As usual, though, he did it with such delicious humor, gayety and disarming charm that the major surgical operation he performed was something that even the most sensitive Irishman and Englishman can relish. The playwright may say that there are some pretty deplorable qualities about both Gael and Saxon, but

he suggests that they are the salt of the earth, for all their nonsense.

A Paradox

The play has a bit of plot trouble here and there, with the result that some of the first act

is inclined to be just the slightest bit dull. Even that act, however, is filled with wonderful things. The play has not been on for more than ten minutes before Shaw has demolished the stage Irishman, and it is not longer before the paradoxical truth is revealed that, in general, the Englishman is the incurably

"John Bull's Other Island"—continued

romantic fellow and the Irishman the bitter and sardonic realist. It is curious that it should still prove so surprising a discovery.

A bit of plot continues to emerge in the second act, and it does not supply the best part of the play, but chiefly the dramatist is so concerned with his incisive mockery of national traits that he has no time to waste on such trifles. It may be that my personal interest in the matter of Irish character and Anglo-Irish relationships makes me particularly susceptible to the

truth and humor of "John Bull's Other Island," but it does seem to me that almost all of it is enchanting. I certainly would not go so far as to say that Shaw has told all the truth about his subject, but there is no doubt that he has gone a long way toward it.

Mr. Broadbent

I suppose it is a natural paradox of the situation that, in a comedy dealing chiefly with the Irish, the most entertaining character should be an Englishman. Larry Doyle, the brooding

Irish realist, is interesting enough as Shaw depicts him, and so are his relatives and neighbors, but Tom Broadbent, the fatuous, romantic, idiotic, blundering, humorless and unvanquishable Briton, is the central figure and the chief joy of the play. It is a rich and wonderful role, and in it Hilton Edwards, who is also the company director, gives a brilliant performance. The triumph of the evening belonged rightly to Mr. Edwards.

The co-star of the group, Micheal MacLiammoir, has a less striking role as the satur-

nine Doyle, but he plays it excellently. In the end it is neither Doyle nor Broadbent who expresses the final eloquent word of Shaw the mystic, but the touching character of a mad Irish priest, and Edward Golden plays him admirably. There is good work by Meriel Moore as the girl the Englishman wins and Norman Barrs as an English valet who scorns the Irish for pampering themselves. "John Bull's Other Island" is a comedy filled with truth and gaiety.

The New York Times

FEBRUARY 11, 1945

AT THE THEATRE

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Although Mr. Shaw's "John Bull's Other Island" is a shrewd and witty play, it is long, it is verbose and a good deal of it is based on political situations that no longer exist. Although the Dublin Gate Theatre company is amiable, it is not brilliant enough to make so much talk continuously incoherent. In their performance at the Mansfield last evening they did not make "John Bull's Other Island" sound as hilarious or look so tight and sturdy as Maurice Evans' production of "Man and Superman." When "John Bull's Other Island" was originally produced in 1904, King Edward laughed so uproariously that he broke his chair. Mayor O'Dwyer, who is our royalty, did not laugh so heartily last evening.

With those unpleasant observations out of the way, let us dwell on happier things. For Mr. Shaw's portrait of a sentimental Englishman patronizing the Irish and mistaking their provincialism for charm is funny as an idea and brilliant in its analysis. As an Irishman who escaped to England early in his career, Mr. Shaw knows the Irish like a native and is not hoodwinked by their manners. But he also knows the Englishman well enough to caricature him accurately. Tom Broadbent has a sound business head. But he is romantic, fatuous, obtuse and dull-witted and carried along by British pomposities.

His adventures in Ireland among people who are not deceived by virtuous swag are enormously funny, especially in the reading. To this theatregoer "John Bull's Other Island" is more sparkling between covers than it was on the stage last evening, especially in the opening scenes. For the Gate Theatre mummery began their performance drily and soberly in a

realistic style that Mr. Shaw would doubtless approve. But since the Gate Theatre speech is not familiar and the intricacies of Mr. Shaw's political allusions are not immediately apparent, a broader style in the acting would be not only useful but funny.

That is what we got in the second half of the performance, and the absurdities of Tom Broadbent's solemn assumptions became enjoyable. It is too early to deliver a grave pronouncement about the quality of the Gate Theatre. But it is not too early to recognize the talents of Hilton Edwards, who plays the part of Broadbent. Once the comedy gets Broadbent out of England and into the cozy village of Rosculen, Mr. Edwards preens and patronizes, gasps and orates in a fine, flamboyant vein, and "John Bull's Other Island" seems delightfully full of guffaw.

Micheal Mac Liammoir, as the liberated Irish intellectual, speaks much too rapidly to be intelligible—as if he were addressing an audience exclusively composed of George Bernard Shaw. As the taciturn English valet, Norman Barrs has one scene of petulant retribution that he plays with refreshing sharpness and energy. Meriel Moore acts the part of Norah with the manners of a lady, and Norah O'Mahony is cordial and hospitable as the mistress of the Rosculen house. Edward Golden brings a quick intelligence and some spiritual insight to the part of the melancholy unfrocked priest and philosopher.

Especially for the interiors, the painted backcloths by Molly MacEwen are quite satisfactory and are worth the attention of a theatre like ours where scene-designing has become cumbersome. But this initial performance of the Gate Theatre company is agreeable without being original or fresh. A Shaw comedy generally needs a little architecture in the performing. According to Christopher Morley, the late Don Marquis once remarked that he thought he could make a lot of money by dramatizing the works of Bernard Shaw. "John Bull's Other Island" could do with a little dramatization in the acting.

The Sun

FEBRUARY 11, 1945

By WARD MOREHOUSE

A Moderate Shawian Frolic.

The Dublin Gate Theater, making its first American appearance, turned up last evening at the Mansfield with a moderately entertaining performance of George Bernard

Shaw's "John Bull's Other Island," a play that is fiercely archaic and outmoded but still possesses a great deal of wit and sententious humor.



The players from Dublin are fairly bleak in the beginning of the evening, but they get livelier as they go along and the company's best actor, Hilton Edwards, in the role of Shaw's typical Englishman (as of 1904) is consistently amusing for two hours. A skillful and ingratiating actor, this Edwards, and he frequently comes to the rescue of a prolix and straggling play.

Shaw does not present a one-sided case in "John Bull's Other Island." He makes a thorough examination of the Irish state of mind in the early years of this century, and he also pays his respects and disrespects to the English, assailing their efficiency and their vanities and their blundering energy.

The dramatist gets in his satirical comment on subjects political, religious and otherwise as he sends his Englishman, Tom Broadbent, a civil engineer—confident, blustering, swaggering—on a mission to the Irish village of Rosculen in connection with a real estate project. Broadbent takes along his business partner, an expatriate Irishman, who has been away for eighteen years, and there in the Rosculen countryside, near the cherished Round Tower, the visitors are thrown into conflict with a procession of Irish types. Shaw finishes his evening by making a sentimentalist of the go-getting Londoner, who proposes to the long-ago sweetheart of his partner, and by having the visiting Irishman remain a stubborn realist, with all illusions gone.

Hilton Edwards has a great time in his playing of the irre-

pressible Broadbent, but Michael Mac Liammoir, in the role of Larry Doyle, gives a subdued and somewhat monotonous performance. Meriel Moore gets a lot of feeling in the part of Norah Reilly, who sobs on an Englishman's shoulder when she is spurned by the man of her native land. Edward Golden makes an interesting figure of Father Keegan, the mystical, wistful priest, and Norman Barrs is vastly amusing as the visiting magnate's valet, who despises Irishmen when they're in Ireland. Liam Gannon is entertaining as a patriarch of the Rosculen area.

There is a great deal of antiquity about "John Bull's Other Island," and it is by no means one of Shaw's most exhilarating exercises, but it has some delightful moments and offers considerable fun if you can go along with the company until it gets warmed up.



FEBRUARY 12, 1948

Kronenberger

Some Irish Players Do Shaw's Irish Play

Broadway saw Dublin's Gate Theater for the first time Tuesday night, and *John Bull's Other Island* for the second. Shaw's comedy was last performed there in 1905, a year after it was written. But though 44 years old, and not first-rate Shaw, the play seemed a good deal more of an event than the players.



For the play at its best has bril-

liance and bite, which—at least on first acquaintance—the players have not. The Gate has a number of agreeable performers, and two or three highly competent ones. But there is nothing very exceptional about it as a troupe, and nothing very exciting. It never makes *John Bull* seem better than it is, and it sometimes doesn't make it seem as good.

How good you find the play itself depends, to a degree, on whether you care more about its playwrighting or its playwright. As a stage piece, it has obvious and fairly oppressive faults. It is probably too long; it is certainly too long getting started. Some of its

earlier scenes, moreover, are worse than slow, they are downright dull; and some of it, I suppose, could be called dated. All the same, as essential Shaw, the Master's only Irish play ranks in certain respects among his most interesting and significant ones. For he brought to it his knowledge, his insight, his ironic enjoyment, his impartial indictment of two nations; here England and Ireland, Celt and Saxon, are opposed and juxtaposed; and here, as some one able to look two ways but not the better off for it, is the Irishman turned English.

One cannot, I think, fully enjoy *John Bull* unless one accepts England and Ireland as not merely the theme of the play, but as actually the plot. Nothing that happens to anybody is personally very interesting, it's only interesting symbolically. We don't give a hoot whether Broadbent or Doyle marries Norah; but we are considerably amused as to why an Englishman marries her and an Irishman doesn't. This lack of flesh-and-blood excitement ought to prove a grave weakness, but Shaw has done this side of his work so well that it's not. Tom Broadbent comes so richly alive as John Bull that nobody cares whether he comes at all alive as Tom Broadbent. More-

over, Shaw doesn't just play his little contrapuntal theme in the simple key of C major, contrasting English doer with Irish dreamer, Saxon fatuity with Celtic fecklessness. He shows that the English, in some ways, are more "Irish" than the Irish themselves; and that the Irish are in many ways not at all like one another. Both countries are equal targets of Shaw's wit, and the Anglicized Irishman (which, of course, Shaw himself is) is in some ways the worst-damaged target of all. Any moral, as usually with Shaw, tends to be double-edged. Doyle talks sense, and isn't happy. Broadbent talks rot, and is a great success. Father Keegan has wisdom and vision, and is accounted mad. Yet there is more than paradox and fireworks to *John Bull*; it is sound quite as often as it is scintillating.

Hilton Edwards' Broadbent is a solid and lively if not particularly subtle piece of acting; Micheal Mac Liammoir's Doyle a fairly ineffective one. Meriel Moore makes an agreeable Norah, Norman Barrs an amusing Hodson, and Edward Golden—particularly in the last scene—a good Father Keegan.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

New York World-Telegram

FEBRUARY 12, 1948

Dublin Players Animate Shaw's Irish Bull

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

There are many eternal verities about the contrast between the English and the Irish in the course of "John Bull's Other Island." The simplest summation of it all is that "the English are so clever in their foolishness, and the Irish are so foolish in their cleverness."

It is a good humored and penetrating play, this 1904 work of Shaw. It lingers on the ear with more volubility than wit. That is partly due to so much of it being a private joke as far as an American audience is concerned. But it likes to hear itself talk.

The early sequences somewhat laboriously take an Englishman and his Irish business partner to the town of Rosculen which the Irishman left 18 years before.

Once the physical propinquity is established, the differences in the English and Irish natures are probed with an insight that is rarely dated. Some of the perusal is uneventful and repetitious. The sharper scenes are gems.

The play, with something of a camera technique, observes the foreigner in love, in business and in politics. It swings away from the central character to watch his valet argue with a tenant, newly turned landlord, in one of its brightest sequences.

There is a lot of complacent fun in the way Tom Broadbent hustles about as the butt of a multitude of Celtic jokes. The natives rarely miss a chance to make outrageous fun of him. With unresisting assurance he always rationalizes his position to avoid discomfiture.

The Irish continue to laugh while he acquires anything in sight that strikes his taste. They are not moved, as he takes what he wants, simply because he wants it more than they do.

With insensitive confidence he annexes the girl who has waited the 18 years for his partner, convinces the town that it should

send him to Parliament, and plans how he will buy up the county to turn it into an elaborate golfing resort.

The play is done by the Dublin Gate Theater with an unapologetically simple production which suits its period and focuses attention on the human values.

The attention wanders when the company occasionally falls into a rattling style, as if each actor had played his role a thousand times before. Then one senses the habit of a familiar audience, and regrets not being a repeater.

It is Hilton Edwards, as the Englishman, who brings the play most of its substance and spice. He is all indefatigable good nature and pomposity. He seems insensitive because he will not let himself be humiliated.

His reactions are as revealing as his statements, heightening the fey malice of the others' teasing.

Nothing is more characteristic than his answer when the unfrocked priest solemnly asks, "You feel at home in the world, then?" He eagerly replies, "Try phosphorus pills!"

Micheal MacLiammoir, co-founder with Mr. Edwards of the Gate Theater, plays the Anglicized Irishman who returns home. He does not seem at his happiest in this sort of verbal comedy.

Edward Golden is excellent as the unfrocked priest. He conveys a calm scholarly humor, and makes his chosen reputation for madness seem an utterly sane conclusion for his existence.

Meriel Moore is knowingly reticent with sharp glints of gaiety as the lady who took 18 years to find a mate, and her aunt is gently unperturbed in her Irish madness as played by Nora O'Mahony.

Norman Barrs is excellent as an indignant English valet, and Roy Irving adds some delightful scenes as a superstitious lad of the town.

"John Bull's Other Island"—continued

Daily Mirror

FEBRUARY 11, 1948

Gate Theatre Offers A Play by Shaw

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Under the sponsorship of Aldrich and Myers, the Gate Theatre, of Dublin, Ireland, began a six weeks' season at the Mansfield Theatre last evening. The visitors chose, unwisely we think, G. B. Shaw's "John Bull's Other Island" for their opening bill.

Frankly, we do Shaw better over here. In evidence, we offer Dick Aldrich's Theatre, Inc., production of "Pygmalion" and Maurice Evans' "Man and Superman." Dipping back further into theatrical history there were Katharine Cornell's "St. Joan" and "The Doctor's Dilemma." Before that there were titans named Arnold Daly and Mary Shaw.

"John Bull's Other Island" is a study of Irish-English relations before Ireland won its freedom from the Empire. Though its politics are dated, its study of human nature is as fresh as ever. It is, on the whole, a play well worth seeing.

The Gate Theatre presentation might be described as a good

stock production. Hilton Edwards' direction leaves something to be desired. The first act is badly paced. The players seemed to be struggling for their lines and sense of timing. The second and third acts are much better.

Edwards and Michael Mac Liammoir have the lead roles—the Englishman who preaches progress to further profitable business and the dreamy Irishman who is too impractical to help his country and win his childhood sweetheart. They play them for the most part, adequately; sometimes admirably.

Other players meriting appreciative salutes are Edward Golden, as the idealistic Father Keegan; Bryan Herbert, as the efficient Father Dempsey; Norman Barra, as a wise valet, and Denis Brennan, as bewildered Cornelius Doyle.

The distaff side of the cast appears to be weak. True the ladies haven't the opportunities of the men, but they don't make as much of those they have as they should. Meriel Moore and Nora O'Mahony never succeed in

putting much life into Norah Reilly and Aunt Judy.

Many of the make-ups are crude and the grease paint facial lines stick out like snowy mountain tops in Summer. And they were not helped by the lighting.

The visitors were probably suffering from first night in a strange land nerves, and should improve at future performances, particularly when they get into the native section of their repertory, which includes Mac Liammoir's "Where Stars Walk" and "Portrait of Miriam" and Denis Johnston's "The Old Lady Says No".

Johnston you may recall as author of "The Moon in the Yellow River," an artistic though not a commercial success when presented here some years ago by the Theatre Guild. It was a much better play than it seemed to us on opening night. That we discovered on a subsequent visit. We still remember fondly that wonderful scene acted so magnificently by Bill Harrigan and Barry MacCollum.

Journal American

FEBRUARY 11, 1948

Shaw's Irish Comedy Is Too Talky, Outdated

By ROBERT GARLAND

If anybody is going back on anybody at the Mansfield, it is Bernard Shaw who is going back on Hilton Edwards, Michael Mac Liammoir and their associates from the Gate Theatre of Dublin, Ireland.

Returning "John Bull's Other Island" to Broadway after almost half-a-century, the players hold up better than their play.

This is unexpected. For, right here and now, "John Bull's Other Island" is good and lively in a library. But, on a stage, it is something else again.

Never a man to use one word when three or four will serve, Bernard Shaw let his pen run off with him when writing the only play he ever wrote about his native Ireland.

Between the covers of a book, the Shavian somersaults are

more entertaining than dated. But, beyond the footlights of a stage, they are more dated than entertaining.

With Ireland where and what it is, much of their mirthful meaning has long since disappeared. Now, those Shavian somersaults are to be read, not witnessed.

Along with Mr. Hodson, Tom Broadbent's valet and my favorite character on the Mansfield's stage, you get all fed up on John Bull's other island and John Bull's other islanders. "Erin go bragh!" indeed. "Erin go bang!" would be more to both your likings.

Needs Drastic Cutting

Almost as much as "Saint Joan," a good deal more than "Man and Superman," "John

Bull's Other Island" calls for drastic cutting.

If, until the day he dies, Bernard Shaw keeps up his ban on all directorial editing of his plays, they are apt to talk themselves—and him—into an obscurity they assuredly do not deserve.

The, for the most part, unfamiliar Irish comedy returned to Broadway by the visiting Dubliners is too talky for its own good. Or for the good of anything but an all-Shavian congregation to which the master's every word is sacred. There are times when the talk is sharp and brilliant. But there are too many other times when it is not.

And the story, the slight triangular story of Tom Broadbent, Larry Doyle and Norah Reilly, is not enough to carry "John Bull's Other Island" over the long lean stretches where the wit is on the wane and the dialogue is dated. Where "Saint Joan" has history and "Man and Superman" has customs, the revival at—

Well, that revival at the Mansfield has Ireland! And the Irish! But neither of these is recognizable as such in this day and generation. No longer is Ireland Kathleen nee Hoolihan. Or, for that matter, John Bull's other island. Or a figure of fun or pity!

Heads in Project

Do the Dubliners, acting here—

abouts and far away from home, realize all this, I wonder? I doubt it!

But there are times on 47th st. when their heads rather than their hearts are in the projection of "John Bull's Other Island." As the piece's Larry Doyle explains,

"an Irishman's heart is nothing but his imagination."

Without that heart which is imagination, Bernard Shaw's only Irish comedy is, I fear, somewhat of a disappointment.

Hilton Edwards and Michael Mac Liammoir, co-starring as Tom Broadbent, the English-Irishman, and Larry Doyle, the Irish-Englishman, are pleasant and pains-taking performers. But not a whole lot more!

Norman Barra is dry and likable as my favorite Mr. Hodson. Norah Reilly is pretty as a sweepstakes ticket in the hands of Meriel Moore. Celebrated for her Dona Anna in the "Hell Scene" from "Man and Superman," I wish Hilton Edwards and Michael Mac Liammoir would embarrass Maurice Evans by permitting her to enact it here.

It is, I'm sure, the play and not the players that falls short of expectations at the Mansfield. It is Bernard Shaw who lets the Dubliners down in "John Bull's Other Island." Mr. Shaw talks too much for the Gate Theatre's good.

"John Bull's Other Island"—continued

DAILY NEWS

FEBRUARY 11, 1948

Dublin's Gate Theatre Presents Shaw's 'John Bull's Other Island'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The company of the Gate Theatre, Dublin, which promises a festival of Irish comedies, began its visit at the Mansfield Theatre last evening by presenting Bernard Shaw's gabby old play, "John Bull's Other Island." The intent was amiable and so is the result. Shaw is fun, even when he runs on and on, and among the Gate players is at least one good actor.

The good actor is Hilton Edwards, co-founder of the Dublin group.

As Tom Broadbent, Shaw's burlesque of a typical Englishman, Mr. Edwards is quite delightfully pompous and patronizing. It may be that his partner, Micheal MacLiammoir is equally gifted, but last evening Mr. MacLiammoir was

having a bit of trouble with all this stuff Shaw had given him to say.

Remnants of a Comedy.

And Shaw certainly gave the stuff out when he wrote "John Bull's Other Island." Much of it is witty, of course—but a great deal of it also seems quaint and remote. The comedy is about the Ireland of 1904, and Ireland's problems of British domination and home rule are not exactly current. Shaw's

gift for urbane conversation, his jibes at stuffy British character and a few excursions into the battle of the sexes are about all that is left now of what was once a provocative comedy.

Maurice Evans' "Man and Superman" is a much safer Shaw revival, confined as it is to the war between the sexes—a conflict which does not change much from generation to generation. The political position of Ireland in 1904 is not overly exciting in 1948, nor is "John Bull's Other Island" sufficiently sturdy as a piece of play-making to stand up as a period piece.

The Gate Theatre company seems to have a number of accomplished players of character bits. Its settings are simple—backdrops, mostly—and its purposes are friendly. And its scheduled fortnight's run of "John Bull's Other Island" should be just about right as to timing. Other comedies, including two by Mr. MacLiammoir, are promised for the future.

"Patience"

The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London is playing a limited repertory engagement. Except for their initial presentation space permits us to reproduce only four newspaper reviews of each presentation.



FEBRUARY 11, 1948

A Joke on Oscar Wilde Has Overtones for G & S

Patience, the Gilbert and Sullivan jest aimed at Oscar Wilde and the literary cultism of his day, wowed a huge audience Monday night at the Century. The ill-tempered in the audience—there may have been a handful—were possibly reflecting that, if Gilbert and Sullivan thought cultism was funny, they might laugh out of the other side of their mouths if they could see the cult that has grown up around them.

Not that anyone would try to detract from the greatness of these men, or from the excellence with

which the D'Oyly Carte Company performs their works. Rather one would deplore the intense, uncritical adoration of D'Oyly Carte audiences, when there are obviously things to be concerned about.

One would like the right to feel uneasy that the D'Oyly Carte troupe is performing these operas exactly as they were performed 60 years ago.

One would like the right to criticize Martyn Green, over whom the cultists become most frenzied. Mr. Green is an accomplished and inventive comedian, but he seems to

have done all his inventing years ago, now tossing these old inventions at his worshippers a little by rote. Sometimes he even exaggerates his antics, using tricks that might be scorned as low comedy if pulled by American vaudeville or burlesque comics.

Then, too, one would like the right to feel sorry for the other highly talented members of the company who are not given their due in the hubbub over Mr. Green. Leonard Osborn, Margaret Mitchell, Ella Halman, Charles Dornin and Joan Gillingham as various cultists and anti-cultists in *Patience*, all played Monday night with real style and grace and wit, but were regarded somewhat as rest periods in between Mr. Green's scenes.

One might even have a complaint for Gilbert and Sullivan themselves: Sullivan's music for *Patience* is far less interesting and melodic than one would expect from him; and as a writer, Gilbert seems to have cheated a bit by

'PATIENCE'

Opera written by W. S. Gilbert; composed by Arthur Sullivan; scenery by George Sheringham; costumes by Hugo Rumbold; orchestra under the direction of Isidore Godfrey; staged by Anna Rathell; presented by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of London at the Century Theater, Monday evening, February 9, 1948. The cast:

Colonel Calverley	Richard Walker
Major Murgatroyd	C. William Morgan
Leut. the Duke of Dunstable	Leonard Osborn
Reginald Bunthorne	Martyn Green
Archibald Grouse	Charles Dornin
Mr. Bunthorne's valet	Milton Ross
The Lady Angela	Joan Gillingham
The Lady Euphonia	Gwyneth Collimore
The Lady Ella	Muriel Harding
The Lady Jane	Ella Halman
Patience	Margaret Mitchell

using essentially the same characters and plots in many of his operas, merely changing the names and places and satiric dressings.

But all these complaints didn't have a chance amidst the ceaseless waves of applause for *Patience* Monday night. It made the ill-tempered feel lonely.

—SEYMOUR PECK